

Anagnos, Michael.

Thomas Stringer.

Hv 1663
A534 1906



AMERICAN FOUNDATION
FOR THE BLIND INC.

Thomas Stringer.

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that sight should take the place of hearing in acquiring language presented in its graphic form.

4. The preconception of the Greeks and Romans on this subject were handed down from generation to generation until the sixteenth century, without its ever occurring to any one to study the problem in the light of experimental observations.

5. To the unhappy deaf-mutes, abandoned to their own insufficiency and the desolation of their peculiar misfortune, Roman legislation was extremely prejudicial. This we shall see in another article upon the deaf in Roman literature.

GIULIO FERRERI,

Rome, Italy.

THOMAS STRINGER.*

My hands in earnest blessing
On thy dear head would rest,
Praying that heaven e'er may keep thee
So fair and pure and blest.

—HEINE.

THE story of the emancipation of this hapless boy from the thralldom of a double affliction and of his reinstatement in his human inheritance is as instructive and inspiring as the tale of his early life is sad and pathetic.

Bereft of the senses of sight and hearing at the age of three years, Thomas was abandoned to the mercy of fate and became one of the most forlorn and hopeless creatures that ever crawled on the face of the earth. There was nothing done to arouse him from his drowsiness and kindle in him a spark of intelligence. He was in a pitiful plight, although his physical wants were attended to, and he was comfortably clad and fed.

* Reprinted, by permission, from the Report of the Perkins Institution and Massachusetts School for the Blind, 1906.

It was in April, 1891, that this unfortunate child was brought to us by a kind-hearted nurse from the Allegheny hospital near Pittsburgh. He appeared then to be like a good-natured little animal, wholly unconscious of himself and of his isolation from the outer world, and utterly indifferent as to where he was and what was going on around him. He was indeed an abject image of lifeless apathy, a bundle of flaccid muscles and nerveless flesh. He showed no signs of energy and no desire to come into communion with his fellow men. Apparently his actions and movements had their origin in an elementary instinct of self-preservation, not unlike that of a puppy, and were very simple and rudimentary. They consisted in eating, drinking, creeping, shaking a bunch of keys for amusement, and sleeping; and these performances constituted the strands in the web of his existence.

Although a number of persons deprived of the senses of sight and hearing had been educated at the institution, no one of them had come to us in such a low and wretched condition. Nevertheless the poor boy was received with open arms at the kindergarten in Jamaica Plain, and the momentous task of building up a frail and weak constitution and of releasing an enchained soul from its fetters began at once. Tommy was four years and nine months of age at this time.

It is no exaggeration to say that the happiest and most auspicious event in Thomas's life was his admission to the blind children's sunny garden, which was most appropriately called by Dr. Alexander McKenzie of Cambridge "the university of humanity." Here he was placed in the midst of genial surroundings and was cared for and watched with parental solicitude. Here everything was fresh, sweet, and invigorating, and he lived, moved,

and had his being under a "canopy of love." Here he was trained and brought up in accordance with the methods invented by Dr. Howe for the deaf-blind and with Froebel's principles of modern pedagogy. Here his mind was disinterred from the sepulchre of never-ending darkness and stillness and set free to

Ascend the native skies and own its heav'nly kind.

Here simple rational methods of nurture and all available means for improvement were intelligently used and skilfully applied to develop his muscles and strengthen his vital organs; to awaken the dormant parts of his brain and rouse his spirit from its torpor; to foster to germination the seed of his intellectual faculties and give him the habit of learning by doing; to make him skilful in the use of his hands and cultivate his natural inclination and aptitude, and to lay firmly the foundation of his character. Finally, here a splendid educational battle was fought against fearful odds and appalling difficulties, and a signal victory was won.

Thus through the unwavering attention and the judicious treatment and discipline which Thomas has received at the kindergarten, a remarkable transformation has been achieved in his case. Out of a puny, dull, spiritless little creature, a mere piece of clay shaped into human form and endowed with breath and with blind impulses to certain actions, there has been triumphantly evolved a fine, sturdy boy, possessed of superior qualities of head and heart and of rare manual dexterity and mechanical ingenuity. Indeed, the general development of this child and the rapid progress which he has made in climbing the rounds in the ladder of human intelligence, constitute a most remarkable feature in the history of education and afford a striking example of the great work which is done in the kindergarten at Jamaica Plain.

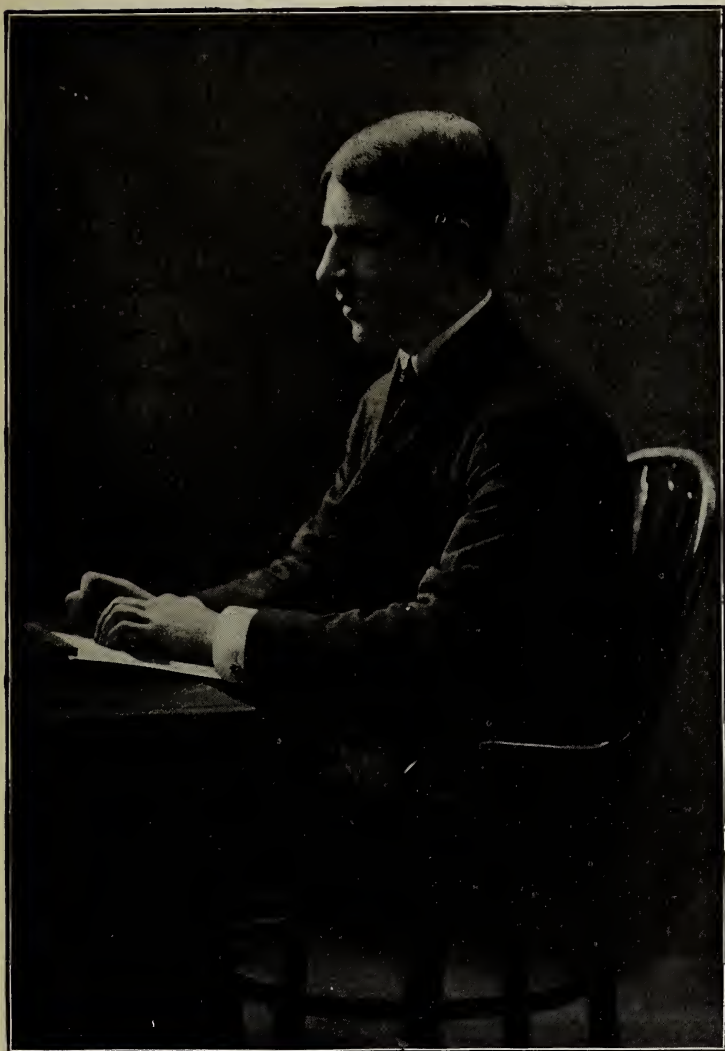
Physically Thomas is a well grown lad with a sound, healthy, and robust body. He measures 5 feet and 5.7 inches in height and weighs 131 pounds. He is gentle and amiable, yet not lacking in spirit, resolute in purpose, noble in aims and sentiments. No one meets him without being deeply impressed with the manliness of his bearing, the erectness of his carriage, the comeliness of his appearance, and the neatness of his attire. The weight of his affliction has been unable to overcome the



TOMMY STRINGER AS HE APPEARED
SHORTLY AFTER ARRIVING IN BOSTON.

joyousness of his disposition, and he is bright, merry, and full of fun. He represents a typical youth who is strong and hale, and who thinks acutely, reasons rationally, judges accurately, acts promptly, and works diligently.

The picture of Thomas inserted on this page is an exact copy of the photograph taken of him soon after his admission to the kindergarten and represents him just as he



THOMAS STRINGER.

then appeared—a drowsy, heavy child, disinclined to stand erect and disposed to creep backwards and “grovel on the ground.” Compare this with the one taken a year ago, printed on the opposite page, and then say whether or not a veritable educational miracle has been performed in the case of Thomas Stringer. But remarkable as are the steady and symmetrical growth of his physical and intellectual powers and the sweetness of his disposition in the midst of adverse circumstances, his moral development, the rich fruition of his early training and the crown of his character, is even more noteworthy. He loves truth and uprightness and loathes mendacity and deceitfulness. He appears to be absolutely unselfish and is very grateful to his benefactors. His is a loyal and self-poised soul—affectionate, tender, and brave. He enjoys the tranquillity of innocence and the blessings of the pure in heart. He is honorable, faithful, straightforward, and trustworthy in all his relations. He is not only happy and contented with his environment, but seems to dwell perpetually in the sunlight of entire confidence in the probity and kindness of his fellow men. He knows nothing of the meanness and covetousness, or of the falsity and brutality, which may exist among men, because the wrong side of the shield of human conduct has never been described to him in its dark colors either by his teachers or by his companions and schoolmates. His serene and peaceful life may be justly compared to—

A clear stream
In whose calm depth the good and pure
Alone are mirrored.

At the beginning of the school year in September, 1904, Thomas was transferred from the juvenile school in Jamaica Plain to the parent institution at South Boston,

and here the work of his training has been carried on with renewed zest and under peculiarly favorable circumstances. A broader field of activities, a wider circle of domestic and social relations, a much larger number of students and playmates of his own age, a new special tutor of exceptional efficiency and enthusiastic energy, all contributed to render the change truly delightful and to make him exceedingly happy. His teacher entered upon her duties with great earnestness. As she had found that he was not as thoroughly grounded in some branches of study as he needed to be, she undertook to give him instruction in such subjects as were required to fill the gaps and make up the deficiencies in his previous training. This was done with the explicit purpose of enabling him to gain admission to the advanced department of the institution, which corresponds to the public high schools, and to graduate therefrom in due season.

The arrangements which were made for the continuance of Thomas' education, as well as for his personal comfort, were eminently satisfactory, and an era of good work, full of promise for the future, seemed to have been inaugurated. But in the midst of his joy and contentment he met suddenly with a terrible loss, which came like a shock upon him and plunged him into a sea of distressing sadness and heart-rending sorrow. His beloved teacher and devoted companion, Miss Ruth Louise Thomas, was drowned on the seventeenth day of August while bathing with two of her sisters at Sea View beach in Scituate. This dreadful accident caused consternation to Thomas, who was informed of it by his intimate friend and faithful comrade, Frederick Vincent Walsh. For days, weeks, and months the unfortunate boy moaned and grieved over the awful calamity. The loss to him was irreparable.

Miss Thomas was a young woman of exceptional parts and rare traits of character that commanded the admiration of those who were brought into close contact with her. She was born twenty-eight years ago in Worcester and was the daughter of David R. and Susan Thomas. She received her education at the classical high school in her native city and at Mount Holyoke college. Miss Thomas possessed an active mind, keen insight, an amiable disposition, and the true missionary spirit. She was an indefatigable worker in her chosen calling and eminently candid and straightforward. One felt indeed that she was the soul of honor. Her frank and womanly nature, her broad sympathies and lively temperament, gave her a winning personality. Although her term of service with us was very short, she proved to be one of the ablest instructors of the blind deaf-mutes we ever met. She was entirely altruistic and thoroughly devoted to her pupil. She worked and walked with him, advised him and corrected his faults gently, and did everything in her power to improve his mind and to help him rise in the scale of manhood. She strove to quicken his energies, broaden his views, and to supply what was lacking in the symmetry of his development. On his side he felt the warmth of her love and found cheer and delight in the sunlight of her genuine friendship. We grieve that such an invaluable co-worker was taken from us at the height of her usefulness, and we use no formal phrase in saying that she is deeply lamented by every member of our household. The void which she left in our circle can hardly be filled.

At the close of the school year Miss Thomas prepared a detailed account of the work of her pupil, which her untimely death invests with increased interest and which is herewith inserted in full.

With the beginning of the school year Tom found himself again in new surroundings and under changed conditions both in his home life and school relations. The larger buildings at South Boston, the increased number of fellow students, the transition from the family circle at the kindergarten in Jamaica Plain to the community life at South Boston, all demanded a readjustment of Tom's energies. The change has proved beneficial, making him more unselfish, more mindful of the rights of others, while enlarging and broadening his views of life. The comradeship of lads of his own age, the daily contact with all sorts and conditions of boys, has done much to lessen some of Tom's too precise habits and his tendency to fall into ruts, while, most encouraging of all, it has aroused his ambition to be just as other pupils are. This has been shown in his reluctance to remain with his teacher during recess, for, as he says, "the other boys' teachers do not walk with them on the piazza," and in his annoyance, at the beginning of the year, when some of the scholars tried to lead him up and down stairs, to and from his room; "I can walk alone," Tom said indignantly.

In his studies, Tom's methodical habits and excellent memory have stood him in good stead. His work has been thorough and his progress steady. His comprehension of life will always be concrete and his training should invariably be along the path of the actual rather than the theoretical, along practical rather than philosophic lines. His sense of touch, unaided by imagination, is the great avenue of intercourse with the outer world. This sense, as might be expected, has been highly developed. Thus he can distinguish the steps of his room-mate, his friend Fred, and his teacher by his acute sensibility to vibration. In taking up typewriting it was thought that he would have difficulty in telling when the end of the line was reached, but it was soon evident that Tom felt the jar made by the warning-bell, and thus the problem was solved.

Tom has studied English grammar and composition, physiology, typewriting, seating cane-bottomed chairs, and gymnastics.

In English Tom has made good progress in the use of longer and more complex sentences and in more careful construction, and he has shown a greater interest in language. Special effort has been put forth to widen his vocabulary and to overcome his tendency to use short disjointed phrases.

Physiology has been the subject in which he has been most interested, arousing his enthusiasm more than any other of his studies. Such questions as "Why has the tongue no bones?" "Why are there eight carpal bones and only seven tarsal bones?" betray his interest, as do such original remarks as "The heart has two floors, an upper and an lower, the upper with two auricle rooms in it and the

lower with two ventricle rooms," and "Animals' hind knees bend backward and that is the reason a cat cannot sit down as I do."

Typewriting has brought into play Tom's neatness and accuracy, while in caning he has done excellent work, having caned fourteen chairs during the year, working fifty minutes each day.

Gymnastics, which Tom has not practised regularly for some years, have done much for him physically, strengthening his muscles and serving as an outlet for the abundant energy of the growing lad. He has been the equal of any boy in climbing ladders and ropes, in jumping and swinging, performing the tasks with dogged perseverance, which allowed no sign of shirking. Bar-vaulting was new to him, but after touching one of the boys as he vaulted, Tom quickly caught the idea and vaulted fourteen holes at the first attempt. Soon after this first trial he slipped and became frightened, so that he contented himself with a jump at the sixth or seventh hole, until one day, of his own accord, he announced that he was going to try to jump the fifteenth hole. Those watching him were somewhat skeptical, but Tom persevered until he had cleared the seventeenth hole, and then he stopped only because the director was afraid of his becoming frightened again. The running, jumping, and wrestling with the other boys has met precisely his need of active motion.

Tom's leisure hours have been given to work with his ever-beloved tools, to walks, and, one happy day, to fishing with the other boys; to excursions to Newton, Taunton, Nantasket, Worcester, Brookline, Jamaica Plain and the Youth's Companion building, to letter-writing, and to the making of plans of various enterprises of his own. He has spent many happy hours in trying to make a metronome out of an old clock which had been given him and in measuring, with a plumb-line and a surveyor's tape, the height of his room above the ground and the depth of the water in various places about City Point.

Tom's sense of humor has often helped to enliven the year. He has taken mischievous delight in shutting the doors in the lower corridor of the school and in laughing gleefully when the boys bumped into them with a great clatter; in jumping out of his closet unexpectedly upon his room-mate; in hiding the latter's clothes and then explaining "I did it because I am a joker;" and in clumping down to gymnastics with number nine shoes on his number six feet.

The year has been one of progress for Tom along every line. He has grown more manly, delighting in many little courtesies to his

teacher, in generosity to his friends, and in obedience to the rules of the school. His spirit of independence has been shown in his request to be allowed to pack his own trunk, to arrange his own room, and to do many other things for himself. His life has been broadened, as shown by the fact that whereas in the fall he continually talked over and over again upon a few subjects in which he was interested, he now seldom harps upon the same thing. His interests are more and more those of a typical, healthy boy. In disposition, the end of the year finds a gradual lessening of the attacks of moodiness, which were a constant source of anxiety in the fall, and a gentler, less obstinate, more tractable spirit in their place.

Tom's personal charm has been shown very clearly in the way in which he has endeared himself to many in his new home. He has cause to be heartily grateful to the numerous, kind friends he has found among the teachers and students of the school and to others, life-long friends, who have again this year been helpful to him. The close of the year finds him contented and happy—"happy," as he says, "because I have so many friends."

There is just one story of Tom's perseverance which must not go untold. He has long talked of walking twenty-five miles, the distance of Wrentham from Boston, but found time for it only this spring in the Easter vacation. In the orchard at Mr. Brown's farm, he measured off a certain distance between the trees and tied a string from tree to tree, marking his course. Then, allowing twenty minutes for a mile, Tom walked back and forth eight hours and twenty minutes of one day, stopping only for meals. Although so footsore and weary that he could hardly walk the next day, Tom was, nevertheless, very proud of his achievement and asked Miss Brown to write on some cards "TOM STRINGER, 25 miles." These, on his return to South Boston, he gave to his friends in memory of his great feat.

Thus has passed another year with its days of light and shade, its hours of contrariness, its hours of conscientious effort, happily growing more and more frequent, all melting, in retrospect, into a whole which gives encouragement for the past and hope for the future.

Miss Annie Carbee, a graduate of the Boston University, has been appointed to fill the vacancy caused by the death of Miss Thomas. She was highly recommended to

us by men of learning and competent judges of her abilities, and we are very glad to be able to state that she is doing excellent work for her interesting charge.

There is no spot in New England which is more attractive to Thomas than the farm of his esteemed friend, the Rev. William L. Brown, in Wrentham, Massachusetts. As soon as the school closed he went directly to this enchanting place, and there he remained during the summer vacation under the judicious care and wise guidance of his former teacher and thoughtful companion, Miss Laura A. Brown. In the midst of pleasant and peaceful surroundings he resumed his accustomed occupations in and out of doors and kept himself busy in reading and writing, in working with his tools, in making simple repairs in some parts of the buildings and on the fences, in taking long walks, in helping the aged members of the family, and in rendering such service to them as he was capable of giving. No boy residing in the good old town of Wrentham enjoyed himself more or derived greater pleasure from life than he did.

The following account, written by Miss Brown at our request, describes briefly the ways in which Thomas passed the summer months at her father's farm.

As Tom's summer was spent among familiar surroundings, he turned his activities at once into accustomed channels and took up his usual lines of work. Returning to Wrentham is a veritable home-coming to the dear boy, and his sense of part ownership in the farm, with the members of the family, makes him deeply interested in the repairs and improvements which he undertakes.

During the vacation Tom caned two chairs and re-covered several window-screen frames, besides undertaking many minor enterprises in which his carpentering tools were in constant requisition. A metronome which he made from the works of an old clock, providing it with a suitable wooden case, kept him happily employed for a long time.

So busy was he that it was hard for him to tear himself away from his labors long enough to enjoy the short trips which were occasionally planned for his pleasure. Late in the vacation, Tom received an invitation from a friend to spend a week in Maine. He loves dearly to travel, and the prospect of visiting these good friends in a State into which he had never been was most alluring; yet his sense of duty toward the occupations which he had outlined for himself conflicted with his desires and led him to declare that he was too busy to go. Finally he arrived at a solution of the difficulty. He would arise at half past two o'clock in the morning, and with the extra time thus gained he could plan his work so that he could accept this invitation. This he did, and the week in Maine brought him much happiness and many novel and interesting experiences.

Among his self-imposed tasks was that of letter-writing, a thing for which he formerly showed a decided distaste. He wrote in all sixty-seven letters, some in the Braille system and others in the square-hand form of pencil-writing; he showed in them a positive improvement in the ability to express himself clearly.

Tom took plenty of exercise in the open air and in the barn where he arranged a gymnasium. He developed there an original idea in a swing with four ropes. It required a considerable amount of muscular effort on his part to operate it, and thus it constituted an excellent means of exercise.

The last few weeks of Tom's vacation were clouded by the severe loss which he sustained in the death of his teacher, Miss Thomas. This was the greatest sorrow which Tom had ever known, and his grief was very deep and almost overwhelming. The thought of returning to school without finding Miss Thomas there to meet him made him very sad. Nevertheless, with real courage and a manly effort on his part to bear his loss bravely, he once more set his home affairs in order and prepared to begin his school life again.

Here ends the story of what Thomas has accomplished or attempted to do during the past twelve months, in South Boston and at Wrentham, and of his joys and sorrows. Whether it is considered from an educational or from a humane standpoint, the record is exceedingly interesting and instructive. It bears witness to the continued development of the capacities of his mind and to the steady growth of the sterling traits of his character. The sweetness of his nature increases as the years go by.

Furthermore, the record speaks eloquently of the unfailing liberality of those who voluntarily supply the means for his maintenance and training. Nothing could have been accomplished without their assistance. * * *

We regret more deeply than words can express our inability to present a satisfactory report of Thomas's case on its financial side. Contrary to our expectations, the receipts from annual subscriptions, instead of increasing, have been falling off steadily, and there is again this year in the account of his maintenance a deficit of \$415.05, which has to be provided for.

This shortage will be materially diminished as soon as that part of the fund which is now placed in one of the trust companies is advantageously invested and the income of the real estate already purchased becomes available. But even under favorable conditions the problem of providing adequate means for the support of the hapless lad cannot be satisfactorily solved in this manner.

The fund already secured is not large enough to yield a sufficient income, and as a consequence we shall still have to take our hat in our hands, as it were, every year and stand by the wayside, soliciting subscriptions. The sum of \$5,000, at least, must be added to that which we have thus far obtained. This amount will guarantee the safety of the dear boy for all time to come.

Mutely but most pathetically Thomas appeals to the public in general and to his faithful friends and benefactors in particular, asking them to contribute the balance of the money required for the completion of the permanent fund and thus finish the erection of a splendid monument, the greater part of which they have already built. The approval of a plea for helping a case like his issues from the white throne and is written in letters of fire on the

walls of the temple of humanity. If the dumb stars could hear they would glitter a favorable reply to it and fight for its success. Shall fair-minded men and tender-hearted women turn a deaf ear?

MICHAEL ANAGNOS,
*Late Director of the Perkins Institution,
South Boston, Massachusetts.*

THE TWELFTH CENSUS OF THE DEAF OF THE UNITED STATES, 1900.*—II.

IN the last number of the *Annals* we gave a general review of the important Special Report on the Blind and Deaf in the Twelfth Census of the United States, taken in the year 1900. We shall now consider some of the leading features of the report more in detail.

The first question of interest suggested by the report is,

IS DEAFNESS INCREASING OR DIMINISHING?

It is impossible to answer this question positively because the various censuses of the deaf in the United States have not been taken upon a uniform plan and therefore do not afford an exact basis for comparison. So far as appears from comparing the present census with previous ones the proportion of the deaf to the entire population is not increasing, and since the censuses of 1880 and 1890 it has diminished, as is shown by the following table:†

* Continued from the September number of the *Annals*, p. 296.

† In this table and elsewhere in this article persons who could hear well enough to understand loud conversation, erroneously and contrary to instructions returned as deaf by the census enumerators of 1900, are not included. Some reasons why in our opinion these persons ought not to have been included in the tabulations of the report were given in the last number of the *Annals*, pp. 292-295. Happily in some of the tables of the report, which contain all the essential in-

CENSUS.	Deaf.	Population.	Deaf per million of popu- lation.
1830, "deaf and dumb".....	6,106	12,866,020	475
1840, "deaf and dumb".....	7,665	17,069,453	449
1850, "deaf and dumb".....	9,803	23,191,876	423
1860, "deaf and dumb".....	12,821	31,443,321	408
1870, "deaf and dumb".....	16,205	38,558,371	420
1880, "deaf and dumb" (deafness occurred under 16 years of age).....	33,878	50,155,783	675
1890, "deaf and dumb".....	40,592	62,622,250	648
1900, deafness occurred under 16 years of of age* (known).....	31,525	75,994,575	401
1900, deafness occurred under 16 years of age* (estimated).....	32,209	75,994,575	424
1900, deafness occurred under 20 years of age (known).....	33,148	75,994,575	436
1900, deafness occurred under 20 years of age (estimated).....	33,867	75,994,575	446
1900, all the deaf.....	37,426	75,994,575	492

We do not believe that the diminution in the proportion of the deaf since 1880 and 1890 is really as large as the above figures indicate, for in those years great efforts were made to obtain complete returns of the deaf, and less pains were probably taken than in 1900 to eliminate spurious and doubtful cases; but making due allowance for this circumstance, the comparison of the last census with all the former ones certainly gives us no reason to fear that deafness is increasing in America.

There are no census statistics of congenital deafness prior to 1880, but a comparison of the censuses of 1880, 1890, and 1900 indicates that congenital deafness, like deafness in general, is diminishing rather than increasing. The following table shows the number of congenitally deaf

formation, the returns of the "totally" and the "partially" deaf are given separately, so that it is possible for us to present here the statistics of the genuine deaf unincumbered with the cases improperly reported.

* In this table the cases in which deafness occurred under sixteen years of age are mentioned for the sake of comparison with the census of 1880, in which "deaf and dumb" meant persons who became deaf under sixteen.

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Anagnos, Michael.

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